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# Book Reviews

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# BOOK REVIEWS

*Common Lands, Common People: The Origins of Conservation in Northern New England.* By Richard W. Judd. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997. Pp. 335. Cloth. $35.00.)

In a 1985 *Maine Historical Society Quarterly* article outlining research opportunities in Maine environmental history, Richard W. Judd concluded by observing that the field had "exciting potential." [Richard W. Judd, "Research Opportunities in Maine Environmental History," *Maine Historical Society Quarterly* 24 (1985): 410.] From that seed has sprung *Common Lands, Common People: The Origins of Conservation in Northern New England,* a well-researched and well-written monograph in which the author has nurtured rich documentary potential into an important historical bounty.

The book has an even broader scope than the one originally envisioned by Judd, encompassing as it does all of Northern New England. Furthermore, it defines the region broadly, adding Massachusetts to the standard roster of Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont. More important, the study suggests its thesis—that conservation was a grassroots phenomenon—applies to the origins of the national conservation movement that emerged in the United States at the turn of the century.

Judd divides the study into four sections. The first, "Foundations," summarizes the pioneering process that carved up a vast forest frontier into many fertile farming villages. As demographic growth confronted the limits imposed by geographic constraints, a rapacious expectation of perpetual abundance gave way to a conservative redefinition of the commons. Tenets of the emerging rural conservation ethic included a belief in aggressive anthropocentrism, a desire to balance cultural and natural landscapes, a commitment to common stewardship of natural resources, and an insistence on democratic access to vital natural assets.

In section two, "Common Lands," Judd explores the impact of the rural conservation ethic on nineteenth-century farm and forest practices. On the farm, intensive commercial agriculture replaced extensive subsistence agriculture. A variety of reforms sought to make farming more productive and less destructive by making it more scientific, more mechanized, more diverse, and more specialized. In addition, an attendant pastoral ideal strove to make the landscape more beautiful.

Meanwhile, concern over the deleterious effect that aggressive timber

harvesting might have on agriculture focused attention on forest conservation. Judd compares the different paths traveled in New Hampshire and Maine as two roads—scientific industrial forestry and moralistic aesthetic forestry—diverged in the woodlands of Northern New England. Because of the economic importance of the White Mountains tourist trade, a major portion of the Granite State's northern woods was placed under public protection. In the Pine Tree State, no such accommodation between competing forest interests could be found. Hence, Maine's woodlands remained overwhelmingly under private control. It is a decisive historical difference that has shaped the forestry practices and economic development of the neighboring states ever since.

The third section, "Common Waters," explores the transformation of Northern New England's river and coastal fisheries. It is a story of competing uses of water resources—to power industry or to foster fisheries—and of often conflicting forms of fishing: forage, commercial, and recreational. With local authorities unable to reconcile these various interests, responsibility for resource conservation increasingly devolved to the state governments. State commissions attempted to manage fisheries by stocking fish, limiting industrial water pollution, and regulating catches.

The final section, "Rural Traditions in the Progressive Era," relates the struggle to maintain local control in the face of the ever-increasing social and economic changes brought about by distant market forces. In chapter 8, Judd examines the new demands placed on the natural landscape. In Maine, the expectation of a bountiful recreational wilderness created friction between out-of-state urban hunters and local rural farmers. While the state regulated recreational hunters through licensure and monitored them with a warden service, their sporting values of the hunt prevailed over rural traditions that aimed to obliterate by any means possible "noxious" game such as deer. Localism triumphed, however, in one of Maine's most famous conservation struggles. In the 1907 Save-the-Lakes campaign, agricultural and tourist interests allied to defeat the plans of mill owners to draw down the Rangeley Lakes to increase the water power supply of the Androscoggin River.

A localistic conservation ethic also persisted along Maine's coastal fisheries. Chapter 9 recounts the triumph of local weir owners over commercial purse seiners in the Down East sardine fishery. It also tells the tale of the most territorial of all fisheries—lobstering. Although the fragmentation of the fishery created disincentives to conserving the resource, concern over diminishing stocks and the weight of scientific evidence eventually led to the voluntary acceptance of size limits on lobster catches.

*Common Lands, Common People* is not only a book about the origins of the Progressive Era conservation movement, it is also one informed by and infused with Progressive historiography. While Judd avoids the "crude dualism" of earlier historians, his narrative is still replete with competitive struggles. Country farmers clash with genteel rusticators over hunting practices. Fishers vie with mill owners over riparian rights. Professional foresters struggle with lumber and paper companies over sustainable yields. Industrialists debate tourist promoters about the best use of the natural landscape. Wisely, Judd rejects the simplistic people-versus-the-elites Progressive interpretation of the conservation movement. In its place, he presents a more complex account in which the evolution of a local to a regional and even a national economy leads to the proliferation of interests groups whose conflicts over resource use must increasingly be arbitrated by successively higher levels of government.

In the final analysis, this book is fundamentally inspired by the noblest of all the principles pursued by Progressive historians. In short, Judd has created a usable past. It is a past that can help us understand, and perhaps even resolve, the conservation issues that continue to vex us in our own time: how to protect the natural landscape from overdevelopment, whether to ban clear-cutting from our forests, how to regulate the hunting of deer and moose, how to clean up dioxin from our rivers, whether to remove dams to restore salmon runs, how to replenish the stocks of lobster and fish in the ocean. As such, it is a past I would urge every citizen to study intently, lest we the people defer stewardship of the environment to technocrats and plutocrats.

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*No Place for Little Boys: Civil War Letters of a Union Soldier.* Edited by Melissa MacCrae and Maureen Bradford. Illustrated by David Priesing. (Brewer: Goddess Publications, 1977. Pp. 109. Paper. $14.95).

Melissa MacCrae and Maureen Bradford have made accessible a very valuable collection of letters written by Civil War private Peleg Bradford of the 1st Maine Heavy Artillery. The story of Peleg Bradford is both tragic and triumphant, as he loses a leg but survives long after contributing to the Union victory.

The letters speak to many key issues regarding soldiers' motivations and attitudes about the war. For example, Bradford's letters reveal the racism common among northern white soldiers and the disdain that some felt for President Abraham Lincoln's decision to make the conflict a war against slavery (in particular see the letter on p. 53). The letters also demonstrate the importance of money in prompting some soldiers to enlist.

The most compelling aspects of Bradford's letters, however, are what they tell us about the centrality of family concerns for Civil War soldiers. Above all else, Bradford wanted three of his brothers to stay out of the army. In particular, he desperately wished that fifteen-year-old Owen would remain at home. He pleaded with his mother early in 1863: "Tell father not to let Owen come out here, for God sake" (p. 29). Ultimately, three of Peleg's brothers did join the Union army, with sad results. In addition to the bond with his brothers, Bradford's letters provide a view of his relationships with his father, mother, and future wife.

The personal drama of the Bradford family makes this volume interesting and useful not just to military historians but also to a broader audience. Indeed, it is perhaps the richest among a growing body of published primary sources on Maine Civil War soldiers which includes the outstanding journal kept by private John Haley, *The Rebel Yell and the Yankee Hurrah: the Civil War Journal of a Maine Volunteer*, edited by Ruth L. Silliker (Camden, ME: Down East Books, 1985).

The actual Bradford letters, which are housed in the Fogler Library Special Collections at the University of Maine in Orono, have been utilized by historians before. However, several components of this volume make it more rewarding than reading the original letters. The editors, for instance, interviewed Peleg Bradford's grandson, Richard Bradford, who provided accounts of Peleg's battle wound and death (pp. 89 and 107). The sketches by Priesing are also a nice touch, especially the one of Owen Bradford's gravestone (p. 106).

If there is a weakness with this volume, it is that the editors did not include more details about what happened to the Bradford family after the war. Nonetheless, they deserve praise for producing this fine little book. *No Place for Little Boys* will appeal to anyone interested in Maine history. The compelling nature of the letters and low cost of the volume, moreover, will make this a great choice for instructors to assign students at the college or high school level.

Andy DeRoche
*Community College of Aurora*

*A Day's Work: A Sampler of Historic Maine Photographs 1860-1920*, Part I, Annotated and Compiled by W. H. Bunting. (Gardiner: Tilbury House and Portland: Maine Preservation, 1997. Pp. 379. Index. $50. Paper $35.)

Of late there has been a spate of books which purport to slake the supposedly unquenchable thirst for photographs of "bygone" Maine. That these often abominably printed and execrably researched attempts to tap the nostalgia market are given bookshop space at all bears out Alfred Stieglitz's observation that in his opinion the American public thinks that "something is better than nothing." It is therefore a pleasure to report on the appearance of a volume which has been some twenty years in gestation and which bids fair to become, like Bunting's previous major book, *Portrait of a Port: Boston*, one of those essential marriages of scholarship and images to which one returns repeatedly for pleasure and enlightenment. Bunting's research is exhaustive, his endnotes detailed and comprehensive and the reproductions of the photographs superb.

In this first of two planned volumes Bunting has chosen the period c. 1860—when technology moved photography out of the studio and into the field—to 1920, just after the First World War. His scope includes boundary markers, logging, shipbuilding, the Yankee itch for gadgets (useful or not) and the breeding and showing of "improved" livestock, so essential a feature of Maine's agricultural fairs. Searsport captain Lincoln Colcord exults at the taffrail of *State of Maine*, toothless against the vagaries of a voyage to China. An inventor poses for the camera against a machine of intricate and unknown purpose. Loggers in the snow fell a tree and against these Bunting, on the facing pages, provides a discerning commentary—more than a caption, not quite an essay.

A good example of Bunting's approach to using photographs and interpretive text to pierce what he terms the "shell of [historical] darkness" are the two images of nineteenth-century Portland salt fish packing (p. 22). His explanatory text is about equally divided between a discussion of that period's fishing industry and the massive construction of the packing building itself with beams supported by wooden "knees," as in ship construction. He points out that each deck beam required six of these natural crook timbers and briefly describes the economics and logistics of the knee industry in Maine. In going from page to page and image to image, it soon becomes apparent that there is, as Bunting warns in his introduction, no logical progression from start to finish. Rather *A Day's Work* is a book in which to browse happily.

Bunting acknowledges the help given over the years by many Mainers in discovering these images in obscure corners. Equally he has extracted

nuggets of historical detail from an eclectic variety of sources. The book is dedicated to the memory of his long-time mentor, historian James Vickery of Bangor, and he notes with gratitude the assistance of the late Elizabeth Noyce's Libra Foundation to Maine Preservation in the form of a grant to establish a revolving fund which will assist in future publications. However, Bunting sounds one ominous note, with which this reviewer heartily agrees. Because of increasingly restrictive regulations on the part of some institutions holding photographic archives, and because of—in some instances—truly staggering increases in fees for their use in books such as this, for practical purposes these collections might as well not exist. Bunting asks, "If a tree falling in the forest makes no sound, was a photograph never seen really taken?"

Nicholas Dean
*Edgecomb*

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*Portland Head Light and Fort Williams: An Illustrated History with a Walking Guide Map.* By Kenneth E. Thompson, Jr. (Portland: The Thompson Group, 1998. Pp. 104. 100+ illustrations. Paper. $11.50.)

*Togus Down in Maine: The First National Veterans Home.* By Timothy L. Smith. (Charlestown: SC: Arcadia Publishing-Images of America, 1998. Pp. 127. 196 illustrations. Paper. $16.99.)

With the exception of Civil War regimental histories and occasional studies of colonial, Revolutionary, and War of 1812 forts and actions, surprisingly little attention has been paid to the influence of the military on the development of Maine. To date, the best overview has been Robert L. Bradley's *The Forts of Maine, 1607-1945: An Archaeological and Historical Survey*, brought out by the Maine Historic Preservation Commission and the Bureau of Parks in 1981. Two new studies, though packaged as picture books, add much to our understanding of pieces of the military puzzle.

Portland's Kenneth E. Thompson, Jr., has long been known as one of Maine's foremost experts on fortifications. He focuses his knowledge and energy on Portland Head in Cape Elizabeth, the site of Maine's oldest lighthouse (first lighted in 1791) and the military uses of the headland, which date back to the Revolutionary War but start in earnest in the 1890s. Indeed, it was the development of Fort Williams (named for

Maine native Brevet Major General Seth Williams (1822-1866) that is the heart of this book. In the early 1890s the Army built mining casements and batteries at Portland Head as a subpost of Fort Preble in South Portland. It became a fort in 1899 and remained a key military link right up through World War II when it became part of a large military presence from Popham Beach to Piscataqua.

In both sweep and detail Thompson delivers, showing how the fort fits into changing national defense plans and how a neat brick and concrete town came into being. This is the first time that a building-by-building history has been published and the author provides documentation, maps, and wonderful photographs. The best part of the study concerns the importance of Fort Williams and its sister installations during World War II when Casco Bay became a base for the North Atlantic Fleet, the location of merchant shipyards, and the site of a key naval air station. It concludes with the decommissioning of the fort after the war and the loss of many of the buildings due to civic neglect and its reuse as a park.

Historian Timothy L. Smith focuses on the development of the nation's first veterans' home at Togus in Chelsea, Maine. The "Arcadia Images of Maine" series has a mixed success, and the Togus entry ranks at or near the top, largely because of the detailed research behind the images. Smith also provides a short but cogent introductory essay. As he notes: "During the Civil War the northern leaders realized that community services for veterans would be overwhelmed by the number of soldiers suffering from wounds, sickness, and disease." The driving forces behind the home idea were General Benjamin Butler, an 1838 graduate of what is now Colby College, and Belfast-born General Edward W. Hinks.

In 1866 the new Board of Managers bought the old Togus Spring Hotel and by November the first veteran was admitted. A self-contained community, run by and for disabled vets, and complete with classrooms, chapels, a rail depot, amusement halls, shops, laundry, farm, deer park, and cemetery, Togus became an accepted part of the area. Smith provides photographs from the 1860s to the 1960s, showing individuals, everyday life, and buildings. He also offers bird's-eye views of the campus and early printed materials, including an 1875 mess hall bill of fare and a remarkable broadside entitled, "Togus, Down in Maine."

Though the author focuses on life in Togus, he does not neglect the impact of the institution on the surrounding area, including a hefty payroll which benefited civilian employees, especially during the Great De-

pression of the 1930s. He also notes that after World War II the "mission changed from home to hospital and rehabilitation of our veterans."

Smith and Thompson have provided some of the first solid and compact information on the influence of the military in modern Maine. It is hoped that these books will provide foundations for future studies.

William David Barry
*Portland*